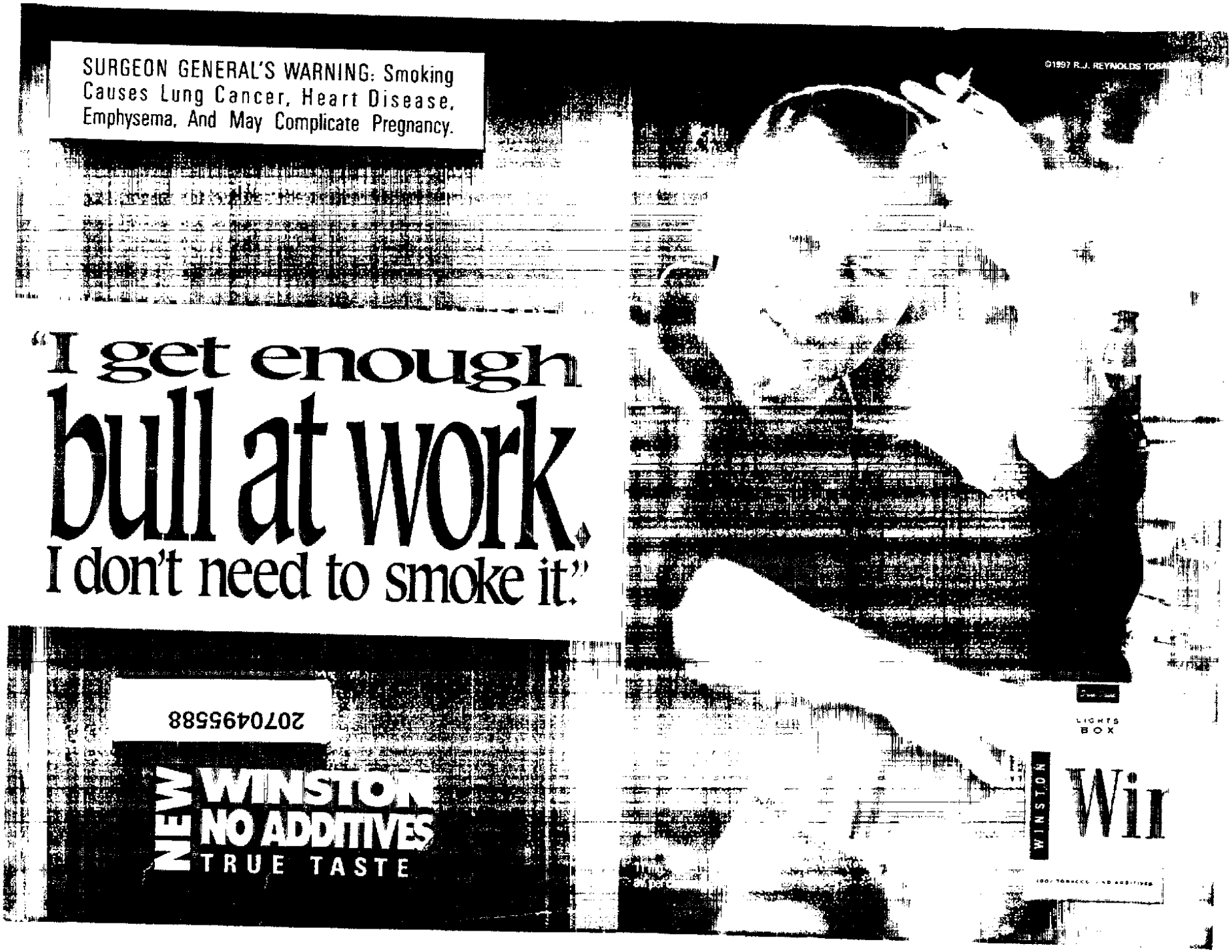

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lobby, dancing all the way. *Tap! Tap! Tap! Tap! Tap!*

Returning to the Loews Santa Monica Beach Hotel bar, he gives a wink that implies a certain ease between star and guest. But Hines is not as easygoing as he seems. Behind that impish smile and cool facade is a man more focused and ambitious than his relaxed charm suggests.

"I go after what I want," says the dancer and actor, whose credits include "Jelly's Last Jam" and "Eubie!" on Broadway and "White Nights," "Tap," and "Waiting to Exhale" on-screen. "I'm not the kind of guy who has second thoughts, who says, 'I should have called [anyone he's interested in doing business with] another time. Why didn't I?' I am aggressive for things in the world that I want. That's what seems to work best for me."

AVERAGE JOE

BY JOE QUEENAN

IT'S A GEORGE SEGAL WORLD

In the past year, George Segal has become a ubiquitous figure on prime-time television. Buoyed by his success in the quirky film "Flirting With Disaster," Segal appeared as Téa Leoni's father on *The Naked Truth*, landed a regular gig as Laura San Giacomo's employer and father in *Just Shoot Me*, and guest-starred on shows like *Caroline in the City*. After years of relative obscurity, Segal has come back with a vengeance.

I've always been a big fan. I loved him back in the '60s and early '70s, when he starred in such excellent movies as "The Owl and the Pussycat" and "A Touch of Class," and unlike some fair-weather fans, I loved him when he used to bring his banjo onto *The Tonight Show* and serenade a bewildered Johnny Carson and Ed McMahon. In my book, you can never have too much of George Segal.

That's why I'm hoping that he will not limit his TV career to a few supporting parts in network sitcoms. Frankly, I would like to see him used in other vehicles as well. I think Segal could lend a hand on HBO's brutal prison series, *Oz*, an unremittingly gloomy affair that features murders, beatings, a man getting a swastika branded onto his buttocks, and other horrors too gross to mention. I see Segal in a recurring role as an odd old reprobate who's always quick with a joke and to light up your smoke, though there's someplace that he'd rather be.

Whenever one of the younger prisoners gets up to sing a mean-spirited song about molesting the first lady, Segal could defuse the situation by belting out a crackling version of "Wabash Cannonball."

I also think Segal could do yeoman service on a program like *Millennium*. This is another show that has had a hard time building an audience because of its dark, brooding subject matter. I see Segal in the role of a blustery, street-smart FBI agent who hasn't allowed his life-long obsession with serial killers to wreck his sense of humor. Here, because of the eerie atmosphere, I think the banjo could be pushing it, but I certainly don't think that some of that trademark Segal badinage could hurt.

The only thing that worries me about having Segal on so many shows is that it can occasionally confuse the viewer. I grew up in the early days of TV, when the stars of one show were never allowed to appear on other shows. Although this cut down on employment opportunities for actors, it made it a whole lot easier to keep things straight. These days, when I see Segal hitting on Lea Thompson in *Caroline in the City*, there is a part of me that says: "But he can't act like that. He's happily married to Mary Tyler Moore on *The Naked Truth*. If Téa Leoni ever tunes in to *Caroline* and finds out about her dad, she'll be devastated." Not to mention what Laura San Giacomo will think about Popsy.

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